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ABSTRACT

Described are two approaches for using newspapers to teach local, regional, or state geography courses to college students. In the first approach, the instructor developed a manual to supplement an introductory geography course which examined spatial patterns of various phenomena as they are found in the Cincinnati (Ohio) metropolitan area. He perused local newspapers for articles dealing with geography for inclusion in the manual, e.g., a story about a Japanese elevator firm's decision to locate an industrial plant in Ohio instead of Kentucky provided students with an example of location theory. Steps for developing a manual and advantages and limitations of such teacher developed materials are discussed. In the second approach, a Cincinnati Post supplement dealing with the economic problems faced by the state of Ohio was used to supplement a geography of Ohio course. The supplement articles were especially helpful because they contained current statistics (the publication date of the course text was 1975). Reading assignments were made from the supplement series. Students gave the course high ratings. (RM)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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"Classroom Strategies for Using
the Newspaper"

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The tendency of many college level geography courses in the U.S. is to take a broad approach, at times even a global one, and spend relatively less time at a more local scale (Monsebraten, 1982). Yet students need to understand their more immediate environs so they can make intelligent decisions concerning the future of their region. Unless the students are geography majors, though, they frequently miss the perspective a geographer can provide about a local community.

Assuming a more localized approach is desired, however, the question arises as to what to do about curriculum materials, for clearly textbooks are written with a larger audience in mind. One solution is to develop a local community approach based on regional media sources, especially the newspaper. This article describes two different formats for using the newspaper in the college classroom. In one case, the teacher-selected stories are incorporated into a manual on the local community for an introductory level geography course. In the second approach, strategies are based on a newspaper supplement where the newspaper staff determines the content and structure of the series. For this example, the articles are incorporated into an upper level regional course, serving primarily as an update to older text material. In both approaches, the purpose of the instructors is to demonstrate how easily geography can be learned on an everyday basis through the newspaper.

An Introductory Manual Based on Teacher-Selected Stories

The purpose of the introductory geography course, title "Elements of Geography", is to examine spatial patterns of various phenomena as they are found on a regional and/or local basis. Since the course is taught at Northern Kentucky University, the course heavily focuses on the Cincinnati SMSA. Thus the course is designed in order to use the eight county region as the common theme throughout the course. But the question arose, what information could be used? In order to meet the needs of the students enrolled each term, the manual Understanding Your World was developed by the instructor and utilized in the classroom with extremely positive results (Futhey, 1982). The manual supplements a text for the course and presents local material in the context applying geographic ideas to their immediate region. The following briefly reviews how the manual was produced and identifies some of the advantages and limitations of this effort.

Preparing the manual is a straightforward procedure and begins with a review of the course syllabus. Thus the instructor initially must establish what topics can reasonably be covered in the term, be it a semester or quarter system. In the Elements course, the instructor gives a broad overview of the local region by covering it through an introduction via map reading of two topographic quadrangles followed by selected topics related to the historical, cultural, economic, urban, social, and political geographies of the region.

The second step in producing the manual is to subscribe to newspapers and/or other printed information about the community and peruse them

regularly and frequently. Newspaper articles generally are written by reporters with very limited, if any, background in geography, and yet stories appear daily that readily lend themselves for understanding geographical space. A story about a Japanese elevator firm's decision to locate an industrial plant in Ohio instead of Kentucky is an excellent example where factors influencing the industry's decision-making were discussed in a newspaper article, and therefore give the students a ready example of location theory (Kentucky Post, 1981). Similarly, stories concerning transportation accessibility and urban growth, as well as a variety of other topics, were well covered (Cincinnati Post, 1979; Cincinnati Enquirer, 1979).

As materials begin to accumulate, a publishing company should be contacted for editorial and mechanical guidelines. For this type of project, there is a need for a publisher that prints in small quantities (e.g. fifty copies) and allows for substitution of pages as the instructor desires to change or update the material.

Next, it is important to develop a detailed structure and format for the manual by determining what role the manual will serve in the course. Since Understanding Your World supplements a text, attention was directed toward meeting the students' needs not covered by the book. In this case, it is designed to serve two purposes. First, it aids students in better comprehending their local environment by reprints about regional activities that expand on ideas introduced in class or the textbook. In addition to being informational, the second aim is to encourage thought organization. Students frequently have difficulty taking meaningful notes, be it sequencing of ideas, separating concept from fact, or bridging the abstract with the "real world." The manual thus serves students in taking better notes for it provides a purpose statement as

well as the basic structure of classroom lectures. Completion of the manual finally involves its physical production--typing and cartography. Each section of the manual, therefore, is comprised of a general outline to be covered in lecture, an accompanying newspaper story, followed by questions related to the reprint. An example of this approach can be found in Figure 1.

Producing your own manual offers numerous advantages, along with several limitations. In terms of the benefits, the following are worth noting:

1. Improved understanding of community. Regardless of their classification (e.g. freshman, sophomore), the students largely are uninformed about the space with which they interact on a daily basis. On a simple test about the local community given on the first day of class, the mean score was only 41%, so it appears there is a great need for this approach at NKU. The test at the end of the semester following use of the manual had a 78% mean.
2. Easy to acquire information. Most of the material incorporated into Understanding Your World was not copyrighted by newspapers, government agencies, and the like, so it was reprinted as needed. One should give some thought as to financial resources if copyrighted works are sought.
3. Timeliness and relevance of the material. A significant advantage of compiling a manual of this type is that it need not suffer from the time lag of textbook production and can easily be updated as needed. Since the instructor has selected the stories, all of the material is deemed appropriate to the course.

4. Convenient reading for students. Northern Kentucky University is virtually 100% commuter and 75% of the students work full or part time. The manual enables the instructor to assign additional reading which is more convenient for the 100+ students enrolled each semester, and subsequently makes it more likely that readings will be completed. Students at commuter universities such as Northern Kentucky University have a great deal of difficulty using reserve materials in the library.

Insofar as some limiting factors that must be considered, one should note:

1. Amount of time to acquire the material. A significant amount of time has been spent simply reading the newspaper, but this is something that one generally does to keep informed on local activity anyway.
2. Increased cost of the course. Because the manual supplements, rather than replaces, a text, it increases the cost of materials for the Elements course. The total, however, is still somewhat less than many arts and sciences courses on campus.

A Newspaper Supplement in a Regional Course

On occasion, newspapers run series of their own which can contribute to the success of a geography course. In this situation, the newspaper has full editorial and reporting control so that the teacher's input is of a different nature than that described previously. It is to this type of newspaper use that attention is directed. The particular course to be discussed is a regional course, Geography of Ohio, taught

at both the University of Cincinnati and Wright State University. The student response has been quite favorable, both in terms of numbers and the course's content. But again, the problem in teaching the course is finding a suitable text, a problem aggravated recently by the outdatedness of the assigned reading material.

The text titled Ohio - An American Heartland, authored by Allen Noble and Albert Korsok of the University of Akron, was written to provide geographical coverage of Ohio in a systematic manner--agriculture, urbanization, transportation, and industrialization (Noble and Korsok, 1975). The major problem with the text is its publication date--1975. Most data are based on the 1970 census, with some of the description taken from 1960 statistics. Thus while the coverage of subject matter is quite adequate, the dated nature of the statistics has caused a problem.

A solution to this was found in the summer of 1982 by utilizing a supplement that had been prepared by The Cincinnati Post. Ohio, like many states, is facing numerous economic problems, and this was the topic of the Post's series. Titled "The State of Ohio--The Story of a State Gone Sour", the supplement complemented the regional text, focusing on the decline in manufacturing, agriculture, natural resources, Appalachian Ohio, migration, and demographics (Cincinnati Post, 1982). An historical review of the manufacturing sector also was included, along with facts on Ohio cities pertaining to unemployment, leading products, and plant closings for 1970 and 1980.

Often times newspaper stories are filled with individual accounts of events. The Ohio series did provide some of this which the students found enlightening and enjoyable to read. Of particular value to the

development of the geography course was the fact that the reporters had researched their topics well and the supplement provided a large quantity of timely statistics. The data not only focused on Ohio internally but also made comparisons of Ohio with the rest of the nation. Coverage here ranged from where Ohio ranked in getting federal aid, to how specific Ohio cities contrasted with Sunbelt cities in wage differences for various occupations, to how Ohio's lobbying effort in Washington, D.C. compared to other states.

In order to use the newspaper supplement as an additional text for the course, daily reading assignments were made from it that coincided with material covered in the text. The supplement provided current information on selected Ohio cities that corresponded with the lectures on urbanization and industrialization. Stories on the present agricultural situation picked up where the text ended.

The use of the newspaper supplement greatly enhanced class participation, especially given that the class size was twenty. This was particularly beneficial to a regional course for often the lecture material becomes descriptive and can be boring to the student. The class was composed of juniors, seniors, and a few graduate students from the education department. They were given a variety of reading materials, including the textbook written by academic geographers, the supplement by journalists, and research articles concerning Ohio, all of which they were required to critique. The variety of sources was a useful learning experience for they were assessing different approaches to the topics and to the study of Ohio.

Students were encouraged to keep abreast of current events concerning Ohio and to share other newspaper materials that they found

pertinent to the course. Particularly useful was the business section of the Sunday daily paper in Dayton that carried special articles on aspects of Ohio's economy not covered by the other sources.

In evaluating the course, two students commented:

1. "I thought the newspaper supplement made the course. The information made the class current and allowed me to have a well-rounded picture of Ohio as it is right now. I do feel it is biased to the bleak side of the picture."
2. "The newspaper supplement was excellent. It brought the material and statistics in our book up to date. It also pointed out Ohio's current economic problems which were very interesting. I liked the paper because it wasn't just facts and information, but it talked about real families and their situation and how they are coping."

Overall, the advantages offered by use of the newspaper in the classroom far outweigh the limitations. Whether it is a compilation of newspaper articles in a manual or a newspaper supplement, the material has been and can be useful in the college classroom. The described approaches work well at NKU and WSU and have made them well-received classes, for students frequently enroll in the courses based on recommendations of former students. By completing the courses, students not only are better informed about their region, but also have learned how to look at this space from a geographical point of view. In addition, the newspaper material is information that students will continue to read after their classroom experience. And hopefully by utilizing the newspaper in the classroom setting they will continue to keep their geographical perspective as they use it in the future.

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Figure 1. Sample Pages from manual Understanding Your World

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LOCATION OF INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES

A. Purposes:

1. to describe the role of industry in the U.S. and regional economies
2. to examine factors affecting the location of industrial plants
3. to identify types of manufacturing systems

B. Stages of industrial development

C. Spatial significance of industrialization

D. Factors influencing industrial location

E. Types of manufacturing systems

F. Industrial resources in Greater Cincinnati

"Tax Break, Loan Cost Kentucky a Plant"*

The race between Kentucky and Ohio to win Fujitec Co. Ltd.'s \$8.2 million elevator manufacturing plant was neck and neck coming into the home turn. They were fighting for a company that would employ 500 within three years and bring hundreds of thousands of dollars in payroll taxes. . . . The state of Ohio, Warren County and Lebanon city officials teamed up to make an economic package that officials of the Japanese firm couldn't resist. The Ohio offering includes a 15 year property tax abatement. The only tax incentive Kentucky can offer is a five year moratorium on property tax. That is left to the discretion of officials in the city where the company locates.

Fujitec representatives took option to buy a seventy acre tract in Warren County, across from Cincinnati Milacron Corp., in early July. It climaxed an eight month search that took them to North Carolina, Indiana,

*Kentucky Post, 25 September 1981.

Ohio, and Kentucky. Potential locations in North Carolina and Indiana were eliminated in April. From then on, it was a behind-the-scenes battle between officials of the neighboring states. They put together economic packages that included financing for construction, training for employees, schools for the Japanese families. Potential sites in Kentucky were narrowed down to two. . . . After they decided on Boone County, they were faced with a problem that is usually a plus factor--the Greater Cincinnati International Airport.

. . . Brad Rechel, investment specialist for the Department of Economic, Community Development, outlined the Ohio economic package, tied together with incentives from the city and county. The state agreed to loan Fujitec \$1.85 million at 2 per cent interest over a 10-to-20 year period. It also gave Fujitec a \$150,000 grant for site preparation and \$250,000 in vocational training funds at Warren County Vocational School. City of Lebanon officials agreed to use a \$730,000 federal Community Development grant to extend sewer and water lines to Fujitec. . . .

Points to Consider

1. What was the most important factor in Fujitec's decision to locate in Ohio rather than Kentucky? What other factors were influential?
2. Why did the various states want Fujitec to locate there?
3. Do you think that Lebanon will fall victim to the growth problems previously described in the Hillenbrand article?